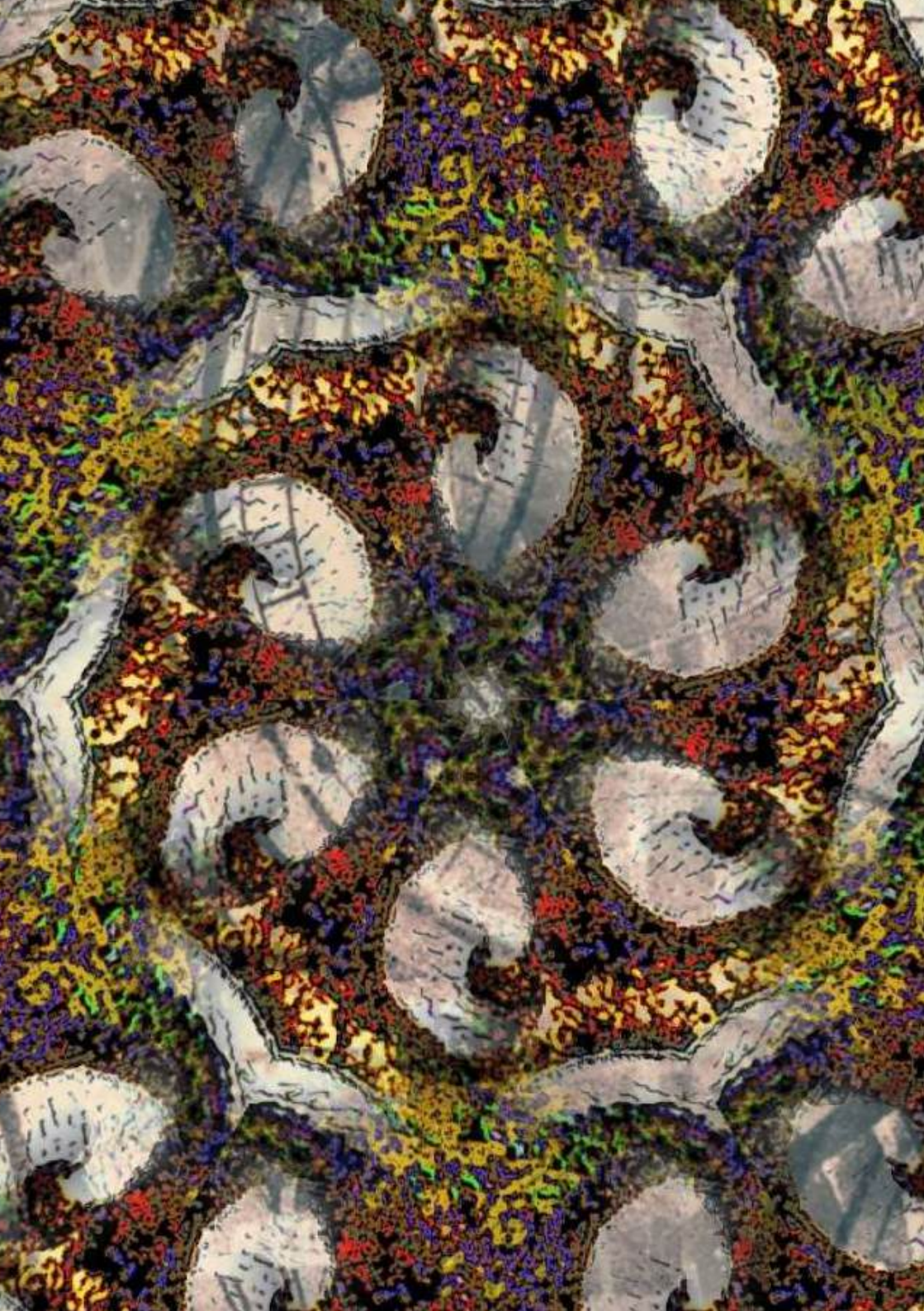


FFR
207







ISSUE **Nº** 207: A FOX WHISPERS TRUTHS THE LION REFUSES TO HEAR.

Fowl Feathered Review is a quarterly, a disordered artifact of the human impulse to categorize and consume the ephemeral. Produced by the Springwound Mammoth Pancake Coalition—an entity distinct from its waffle-centric counterpart—it is birthed under the Fowlpox Press imprint. Virgil Kay, its editor, presides over this enterprise from a paper canoe adrift on the Passagassawakeag, a river of dubious depth and even more dubious inhabitants. Surrounded by featherheads and their aquatic card games, Kay's reign is absolute, his word the final arbiter in the transformation of boastful souls into doormats. Layout and visual conceits are the province of Cookie Granola, while melodrama and histrionics fall under the

purview of Childe Harold. Silent Bill, in his characteristically taciturn manner, provides necessary pauses. The review's structural integrity, or lack thereof, is the domain of Unkie Bob, whose talents extend to the mitigation of typographical errors and the prevention of electrical conflagrations. Everett Enótita serves as Kay's indispensable amanuensis, and the Ecum Secum Literary Brain Trust, in a gesture of dubious beneficence, offers nominal financial support. Printed upon the verdant expanse of Bald Porcupine Island, and laced with the enigmatic Kraa, a bioengineered culinary enigma, the Fowl Feathered Review remains a testament to human ingenuity, or perhaps merely a symptom of cultural decline. ISSN: 1929-7238.

"I am an observer of life, a non-participant who takes no sides. I am in the regimented society, but not of it."

--Moondog, The Viking of 6th Avenue

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Submissions



Fowlpox Press: A Submission Guide for the Determined (or Deluded) To the Aspiring Artist (or Sandwich Enthusiast):

- 1. Craft (or Culinary Construct):** 2-227 poems, a numerical range that hints at both ambition and a troubling lack of self-editing, may find their way to our digital doorstep (fowlpoxpress@mail2poet.com). Alternatively, for the visually inclined, paintings numbered 2-953 (a prolific career, or perhaps a basement overflowing with forgotten canvases?) are welcome. We are also, inexplicably, open to submissions of twelve-inch sandwiches.
- 2. Our physical address:** 250.5 $\frac{1}{2}$ ∞^{11} State Street, Bangor, Maine, 04401.
- 3. The Gatekeeper:** Address your offerings to Virgil Kay, Editor. In possession of remarkably discerning taste, or so he believes, Virgil is a rooster of some renown, a creature of instinct and inexplicable confidence. His title, “China Wok Habitue,” suggests a broader palate than one might expect from a bird, though it’s more likely a testament to the local

takeout joint's generous portions. (**Please note:** Include a bio, a desperate plea for recognition that will likely join the unread masses in the digital purgatory of our slush pile.)

4. **Format:** Poems, those valiant attempts at capturing the human experience in meter and rhyme, should be attached in a Word document or PDF. Paintings, windows into your soul (or a weekend spent with Bob Ross reruns), must be submitted in JPEG, TIFF, or a format our aging technology can comprehend. Jokes, if they exist, should be delivered in MP3 format. We are, alas, not equipped to handle the nuanced art of the live performance. Sandwiches, a curious offering in the realm of artistic expression, require clear plastic wrapping and a small packet of Kewpie Mayonnaise. (**Pro-tip:** The Kewpie packaging is, undeniably, a work of art in its own right, and we encourage you to admire it before consumption.)
5. **The Cycle Continues:** We exist in a perpetual state of acceptance and rejection. A Sisyphean task, some might say. We receive submissions 365 days a year, a testament to the relentless hope, or perhaps blissful ignorance, of aspiring artists. However, with a heavy heart (and a

full crop), we must inform you that rejections also occur 365 days a year.

6. **The Sandwiches:** Ah, the sandwiches. These, unlike your artistic endeavors, find a permanent home within our editorial sanctum. Virgil, in his infinite wisdom, has determined that a diet rich in carbohydrates is essential for maintaining his regal demeanor.
7. **Leap Year Follies:** Leap years, those extra days gifted by the whims of the calendar, offer no reprieve. Aspiring poets, it seems, are undeterred by such temporal anomalies. You are, however, cordially invited to "take a flying leap" during these additional 24 hours.

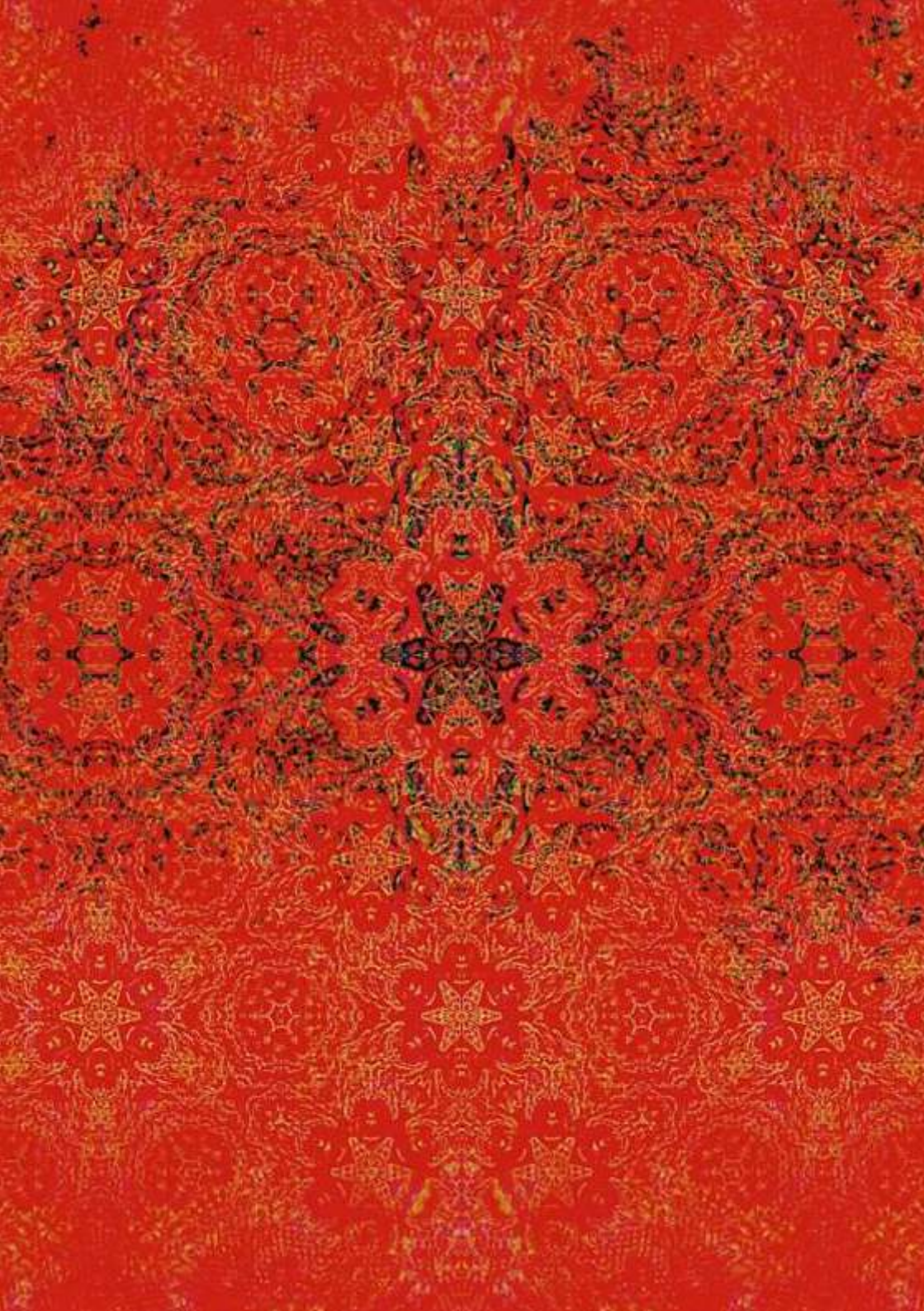
Please proceed with caution. Artistic aspirations are a delicate dance, and the path to publication is littered with the fallen hopes of countless dreamers. But hey, maybe your sandwich is killer. Just remember, Kewpie or bust.

[Fowl Feathered Review | Poets & Writers](http://FowlFeatheredReview.com)
pw.org

*Non ígnora malí, míserís
succurrere díscó.”*

– Virgíl, The Aeneíd







The Half-Price Sale on Waning Suns

By Lou Minos

The sign, an invisible weight,
hovered above an urban canyon where
the sky
was the color of an empty promise.

"50% off collective ennui,"

it whispered into the asphalt.

The ennui itself was a slow-motion tide
of half-read notifications and cold coffee.
A low hum pulsed beneath the concrete.
A static hum in the back of everyone's
skull.

A woman with a purse full of forgotten
bus transfers

reached for a coupon, but her hand
passed through the air,
through the air itself, which tasted of
concrete and failure.

A man in a sensible sweater tried to pay
with a credit card

that existed only as a concept,
a ghost in his digital wallet.

They met at the center of the crosswalk.

He showed her a splintered piece of
wood he had found,

and she, in return, offered a single,
perfectly smooth river stone.

They didn't speak.

The ennui didn't vanish, not completely.

It was still there, in the way a street sign
leaned,

or in the sigh of a distant siren.

But the light shifted.

The sun, which had been a flat, two-
dimensional coin,

suddenly cast a shadow.

And that shadow, that singular,
purposeful shadow,

fell across their hands,

touching the wood and the stone.

They were not healed. They were not
saved.

They were just...

less tired.





The Circle of Tubers, or The
Architect Who Ate the World
in Self-Defense

*(A Fable in Seven Non-Chronological
Refrains)*

By Glupiec

Refrain 1: The Subterranean Archive

Beneath a crumbling fortress of *Architectural Digest* issues—spanning the gloriously tacky years of 1973 to 1982, their pages melded by mildew into a sort of haute-papier-mâché igloo—he awoke, disoriented, as if emerging from a dream curated by an overzealous intern. Time here wasn't a flowing river but a pretentious stack, each magazine a

sedimentary layer of forgotten glamour, all shag carpets and gilded sconces. Into this sanctum arrived the baby potatoes, prewashed and gleaming like smug little punctuation marks, nestled in a plastic bag that rustled with the self-important throat-clearing of a librarian at a silent auction. He arranged them in a circle, as though convening a boardroom of embryonic elites.

“Pray, enlighten me,” he whispered, voice trembling with the gravitas of a man who’d once read half of Proust, “how does one escape the interminable comma splice of existence?”

The potatoes, in their starch-laden superiority, conferred in silence, their mute disdain as thick as a velvet rope at an exclusive gala. One, sporting a single audacious sprout, drawled about its *alma mater*—a bespoke greenhouse in Idaho where it had, naturally, majored in Absurdism with a minor in Existential

Snark. Another, with the smug air of a trust-fund tuber, boasted of its *track record*: “I once rolled off a Whole Foods conveyor belt, darling, and survived to tell the tale.” Their sneakers—limited-edition red mesh atrocities, obviously—were, they sneered, “bespoke, custom-fitted, and utterly unattainable.”

He wept, not for their cruelty but for the *texture* of their scorn, which had the granular precision of a Flaubert sentence crossed with a Yelp review from a scorned sommelier. Then, with the deliberate despair of a Gorecki adagio played at half-speed, he quartered them. Their embryonic sprouts, those judgmental little eyes, glared from the cutting board like a jury of scorned debutantes, their verdict unanimous: *Gauche*.

Refrain II: The Boiling Point as Metamorphosis

The pot was no mere cookware—it was a cosmos, a simmering microcosm of ambition and regret. The potatoes bobbed like pale, sanctimonious moons, their Ivy League pedigrees dissolving into the broth with all the ceremony of a failed startup’s liquidation. He consumed them with the solemnity of a Michelin-starred communion, each bite a revelation of:

- The smugness of a TED Talk delivered by a tech bro in artisanal denim.
- The crisp, grating crunch of a LinkedIn notification from a “thought leader.”
- The lingering aftertaste of a trust fund, redolent of yacht varnish and unearned confidence.

Their attitudes infiltrated him like a hostile takeover. His ribcage swelled with

the kind of ambition that books private jets for “inspiration retreats.” His tongue sharpened, honed to the wit of a Perelman quip at a New Yorker soirée. He began to see angles—geometric and social—where others saw only walls or, worse, pedestrian opportunities.

Refrain III: The Blueprint and the Mirror

Years folded like blueprints left too long in a contractor’s truck. He designed buildings that sneered at convention—glass towers shaped like defiant middle fingers, condominiums with closets so vast they dwarfed the bedrooms, as if to say, “Storage is the new status.” At cocktail parties, he leaned into conversations with the predatory charm of a fox auditing a henhouse:

“Darling,” he’d purr, swirling a Negroni with the gravitas of a man who’d once skimmed Baudrillard, “your *soul* is a

studio apartment with no natural light and a view of a dumpster.”

He dubbed competitors *small fry*—a term he delivered with the relish of a sommelier presenting a rare vintage—and devoured their firms with the efficiency of a hostile merger. His laughter, once a nervous chuckle, became a La Fontaine fable turned on its head: the fox didn’t just raid the vineyard; it *became* the vineyard, gorging on its own grapes with a sommelier’s tasting notes.

But late at night, in the sterile glow of his penthouse, he’d catch reflections that weren’t his own. The potatoes’ eyes—now *his* eyes—blinked back with the ancestral smugness of a country club membership committee.

*Refrain IV: The Fable Within the Fable
(As narrated by a pigeon, roosting on his 47th-
floor balcony with the gravitas of a tenured
professor)*

Once, a lion (all bravado, zero nuance) and a fox (cunning, with a minor in tax evasion) bickered over a blueprint for a skyline-defining monstrosity.

“I shall devour the world with my roar!” bellowed the lion, pawing at the plans like a toddler with a coloring book.

The fox, adjusting its bespoke monocle, smirked. “And who, pray tell, will navigate the labyrinth of municipal permits?”

They struck a deal: the lion ate the architect, savoring the aftertaste of his pretensions, while the fox filed the paperwork with the finesse of a hedge fund manager dodging an audit. The building, naturally, never materialized.

Moral: PowerPoint presentations are not load-bearing, and neither is hubris.

Refrain V: The Craving

Success tasted like freezer-burned foie gras served on a private jet with turbulence. He craved *more*—not mere wealth, but the act of *consumption itself*, as if he could trademark gluttony. He began with cities, swallowing skylines whole, washing them down with rivers like a sommelier pairing a Château Margaux with a mid-tier metropolis. Continents followed—Africa crunched like a continent-shaped artisanal chip, dusted with the salt of forgotten histories. Each bite erased a memory: his mother's lullabies, the damp-cardboard scent of overpasses where he'd once slept.

The universe, now reduced to a cornerless room the size of a minimalist loft, echoed with the potatoes' old taunt:
Small fry. Small fry.

Refrain VI: The Silence After

He floated in the void, a bloated spheroid of self, like a hedge fund manager who'd overleveraged his ego. No up, no down—just the faint, obsessive sound of his own teeth grinding against *nothing*, like a board meeting with no agenda.

In the distance: a bag. Unwashed, *unpeeled* potatoes, orbiting like derelict satellites in a low-budget sci-fi flick. They wore no sneakers, spoke no snide remarks. They simply *were*—silent, unpretentious, and maddeningly unattainable.

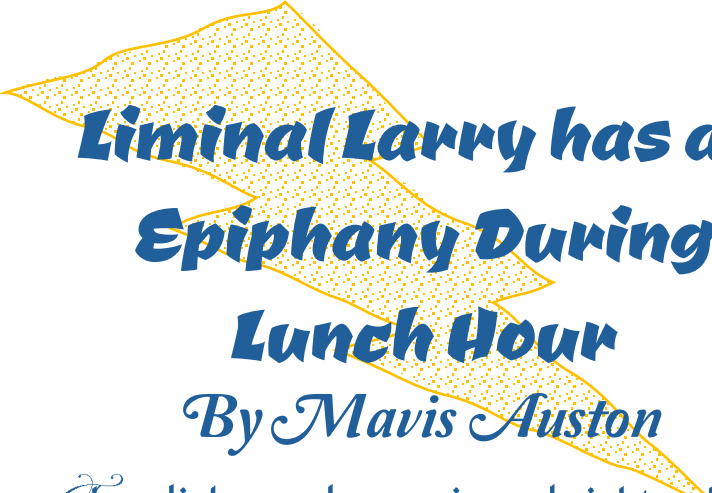
He reached for them, fingers trembling with the desperation of a man who'd once tried to Venmo the void. They drifted away, indifferent as a gallery curator rejecting his portfolio.

*Refrain VII: The Return
(Which Is Not a Return)*

Abruptly, he was back in 1998, entombed once more in the *Architectural Digest* igloo, its mildewed pages whispering of avocado-green kitchens and gilded chandeliers. The potatoes—unboiled, unshamed, and unbearably smug—rearranged themselves in a circle, like a boardroom of venture capitalists judging a pitch. One, its sprout curled like a sneer, leaned forward and whispered, “We are not the lesson, darling. *You* are.”

He opened his mouth to apologize, to beg forgiveness for his hunger, his hubris, his appalling lack of taste. But the words caught in his throat, choked by the aftertaste of a trust fund and the crunch of a LinkedIn notification. The potatoes, unimpressed, rolled their eyes and resumed their silent, starch-heavy conference. 🐦





Liminal Larry has an Epiphany During Lunch Hour

By Mavis Auston

The dialogue began in a bright, clean, rectangular room of the mind, a Matisse collage where every shape had a purpose. There was the blue of the sky and the white of the clouds, and Tasha's small, red house, a perfect cut-out. The sound was the first few, elegant notes of a Bach cello suite, clear and purposeful. My interlocutor, my companion in this strange inquiry, spoke with a craftsman's precision.

“Tasha. A porcelain-vessel of bitter-wakefulness. She poured herself into her world. Nothing spilled. Nothing was lost.”

“And her family?” I offered, our conversation building its own perfect linguistic structure. “The human vessels?” “They were a different genus entirely. A steel-bird of the tarmac, a screaming-engine of discord. They moved by the tyranny of speed, while she moved by the rhythm of the sundial-of-virtue. The world is a tapestry woven by a fool; the threads will always fray.”

“The fool is not in the weaving,” I mused, the words taking on a soft, monastic resonance, “but in the belief that one may mend the fray.”

“Precisely. Tasha was a mendicant, a healer of her own wounds. But you, my friend, you are a master of a different craft. Your editor, Rooster, is a patron-saint of the common-meal. He understands that a sandwich-of-friendship holds more weight than a hundred pounds of gold. The road to wisdom is paved not with stones of gold, but with breadcrumbs of kindness.”

Then the lighting changed. The room became less a collage and more a pastel drawing, a soft, unsettling blur. Dark figures began to emerge from the corners, and the quick, jarring focus of a Bolex camera pulled the image to a close-up on the porcelain perfection of a teacup's rim, now chipped and a little dirty. The Bach was still there, but now a manic guitar riff from a pop song, an absurd and percussive clatter, cut through it like a chain saw. My interlocutor leaned in, their voice a conspiratorial whisper, a Rabbinical commentary on the conversation itself.

“You see? The very structure we have built is a lie. That sandwich, that perfect symbol of mutual accommodation, is a fallacy. It is but a momentary truce in an unending conflict. The zine archives, those puritanical bastions of the avant-garde, prove it. The living-midrash of your world is filled with thousands of sacred texts, but each one has a thousand other, unspoken interpretations. Your

submission, a holy writ, is judged by a priesthood that has already deemed it anathema. Tell me, how can you call it a Codex when every page is already a heretic?"

I felt the need to respond, to Derash on the very nature of this moment. "The truth is not in the text, but in the silence between the words. You speak of Tasha's fortress of a life, but what of her life's true meaning? She built a world that was perfect because it was not meant for others. Her sons, by their very rejection, fulfilled the deep truth of her life's work. She did not want a shared reality. She wanted a beautiful-solitude-in-flesh. Her sons were her living commentary, a testament to her chosen loneliness."

"And what of your own foolishness, my friend? Your regret over Babka? What is this but a commentary on a commentary? You feel guilt for a perceived intrusion, but is your intrusion into her private world

not an echo of your own magazine's futile mass mailings? Tell me, what is the moral difference between sending a digital leaflet to a thousand strangers and a single word to a reclusive artist? The transgression is in the belief that the distance between souls is an illusion."

The light blazed. A kinetic frenzy took over. The Bolex camera's shutter was a machine gun. The perfect Matisse shapes tore and spun in the air like confetti, and Redon's dark, ethereal figures flickered in stop-motion at the edge of my vision. The sounds became a glorious cacophony—a ritualistic drumbeat over a snatch of arias, a distorted electronic hum beneath a frenetic fiddle solo—all building to a single, glorious, dissonant chord. The words now, they were not words but a frantic, unhinged improvisation. The Shakespearean scaffolding collapsed into a jagged, rhythmic gasp.

My magazine. A paper-boat-on-a-river-of-fire. My sons. They are my sons. I am their father. I...I...

The dialogue dissolved. All that was left was the whispered documentation of the fading memory of a conversation, each line a self-destructive, and ultimately fatal performance. A single, final thought: I do not fear the fire. I am the fire.





INTERMITTENTLY SCALDING:

A TABLEAU OF VINYL, JELLO,
AND THE ONTOLOGICAL
WOBBLE IN THE KENORÆ BASIN
By H. Sterling Frieza-bacan

In the gloamunder of a mothballed hull, where the banana boat's refrigerated fartings once ferried the perishable dreams of tropical empires—those fast ships slicing through equatorial mists like refrigerated blades, carrying not just fruit but passengers fleeing or seeking the rot of time—the retired vinyl upholstery cleaner found his anchor. This vessel, a relic of United Fruit's Great White Fleet, an Ontological Anchorage, now squatted in a Central American backwater, its decks echoing with the ghosts of surplus naval conversions. He, let's call him Elmer

(though names blur here, like vinyl under heat), had scrubbed stains from countless couches, coaxing confessions from fabric, while his gerbils nibbled at the edges of reality, revealing secrets in their wheel-spun prophecies. The boat was his *objet petit a*, a floating tableau of decay and possibility, where the air smelled of overripe memories and the faint, illicit tang of forged identities.

Fragment 1: The Wal- Martyr's Arrival, or the Plunger-handed Époche

Consider the stowaway, an intrusion of the Real, emerging from the hold like a malapropism in a sentence of steel and salt. He was a creature of fluorescent despair, his hands replaced by toilet plungers in some unhinged surgical jest—a gonzo escape from the law's suction. This phantom, who had penned bad checks

worth millions posing as doctors in the aisles of consumer surplus, now clung to the boat's innards.

"I have bezzled the Big-Box-Babel," he wheezed, plungers clacking like castanets, "from Claremont to the Bronx, turning ink into electronics, then fencing them where the FBI's gaze fizzles."

Elmer, whimpering to the gerbil on his shoulder, mistook him for a solvent-fume remez. But no; tangible as rubber, the stowaway collapsed. His shady past expired in a tableau of a clutched chest, and from his pocket fluttered a parchment that self-translates into forgotten tongues, but only for a moment. What is identity but a borrowed plunge? The gerbil squeaked approval, or perhaps a thesis on the viscosity of suffering.

In this meditative drift, I pause. How does one weave a stowaway's demise into the fabric of a boat that once lent itself to CIA

plots amid banana crates? The words resist, yet persist in their absurd layering, a portmanteau of theft and tranquility: "Fraudquility," the calm after the check bounces.

Fragment 2: The Inherited Mask and the Multilingual Smoothie

Ah, my son, in the Chausserian consolation of this chaos, where Ephesians' armor meets the butterfly wings of Lorenz's theory—small flaps in a hold leading to hurricanes of reinvention—consider the path of the fox.

Elmer, donning the mantle of the spectral Canadian "expert," raided the dead man's trunk (which tickled unpredictably). He pocketed the sundial that tells time only by heavenly virtues and the rubber chicken that squawked Aramaic

prophecies. He set sail northward, or rather drifted in a Babelized mashup of currents.

"The Kapitan of this Bananenschiff steers toward les lacs expérimentaux," he muttered, blending tongues like a smoothie of pure delusion.

In octosyllabic rhyme, the lesson unfolds:

*The plunger-man dies, his heart in a storm,
Leaving a card that's false in its form.
Elmer takes it, with gerbil's keen eye,
To lakes where science and folly ally.*

Memory floods in Proustian waves—the scent of vinyl polish mingling with banana rot. Irony bites: the fraud artist's legacy becomes Elmer's ticket to expertise, a paradoxical ascent where crime begets conservation.

Tableau Interlude: The Jiggle-Fruit Uprising

Shift now to the lakes, those 58 pristine mirrors in Kenora's wilds. Elmer arrives, the self-translating ID flashing, proclaiming himself a "Gelatinous Ontologist." The lakes become his canvas for breeding organic Jell-O—a wriggling utopia.

Imagine the ascent, dialogue crisp as a Wittgenstein blueprint, delivered in Skaldic patter:

Elmer (to a Warden, flourishing the sundial): "These water-mirrors, steel-birds of reflection, shall birth the jiggle-fruit of tomorrow—Jell-O from algae's womb, untainted by the corporate plunge!"

Warden: "Expert, eh? From the banana holds of yore?" (*Aphorism slips in: 'A false name floats like a leaf on chaos's stream.'*)

The zenith builds, obsessive as Poe. Commentary layers: Elmer re-examines his own words—"That jiggle-fruit? Nay, a remez to the plunger-grip, the slipperiness of self."

Visuals shift: Matisse collages of gelatin give way to Redon's ghosts, a Bolex camera sampling Bach.

But ah, the collapse. Stravinsky's dissonance crashes. The Jell-O refuses to set. Sir Pumble, the knight of inconsequential doubt, arrives to question the virtue, while Mistress Gloop, the shimmering scribe, attempts to document the divine wobble and dissolves.

"The trajectory is askew!" Elmer shouts, attempting to adjust his spiritual armor based on a newly discovered astrological sign. The chicken squawks doom. The Reluctant Archangel appears only to mediate the gerbil's spat with a vole. The lakes resist; the experiments dissolve into

chaotic froth. Shakespearean scaffolding
breaks: a Duncan dance toward silence.

Fragment 3: The Gerbil's Consolation

In this unhinged swirl, where Elmer
swings from Jell-O empires to Gorecki-like
voids, the contradictions marry. No
victory, but coexistence. The banana
boat's hull is a cradle for new follies. The
gerbil, fox-wise, offers pragmatic nibbles:
breed memory's hybrids.

Sensory ironies abound—Perelman's
sarcasm in the failure: "What a plunge!
From Walmart heists to lake-side jests."

*My son, in rhyming couplet close:
Chaos flaps its wings in lake and boat,
Consolation comes in what we float.*

The revue ends in silence, fragments
scattered—a beautiful wreck where organic

aspirations crash, yet whisper on in the
gerbil's wheel.



Ontological Instabilities and Absurdist
Assemblages: A Critical Analysis of H.
Sterling Frieza-Lacan's *Intermittently
Scalding: A Tableau of Vinyl, Jell-O, and the
Ontological Wobble in the Kenora Basin*

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Introduction

In the cluttered corridors of postmodern literature, where boundaries between the absurd and the profound dissolve like gelatin under heat, H. Sterling Frieza-Lacan's *Intermittently Scalding: A Tableau of Vinyl, Jell-O, and the Ontological Wobble in the Kenora Basin* emerges as a singular artifact.

Published pseudonymously—or perhaps autonomously, given the author's penchant for Lacanian slippage—this fragmented narrative defies conventional hermeneutics, inviting readers into a liminal space where vinyl upholstery, gerbil prophecies, and jiggling utopias converge. As the Head of the English Department at Escuela Politécnica Nacional, I approach this text not as a mere curiosity but as a profound meditation on ontology, identity, and the commodification of decay within the late capitalist imaginary. Frieza-Lacan's work, ostensibly a "tableau," borrows from the theatrical tradition of *tableaux vivants*, yet subverts it through a montage of surreal vignettes. Drawing on Lacanian psychoanalysis (evident in references to the *objet petit a*), phenomenological bracketing (Husserlian *epoche*), and chaotic attractors (Lorenz's butterfly effect), the narrative constructs an "ontological wobble"—a term I interpret as the precarious oscillation between being and non-being, authenticity and fraud. This paper will dissect the text's fragments, interweaving close readings with theoretical

interventions from Derrida, Baudrillard, and Deleuze to illuminate its critique of imperial legacies, consumerist fraud, and ecological folly. Ultimately, *Intermittently Scalding* posits that in the "gloomunder" of modernity— a neologism blending gloom and thunder—reality itself is a perishable dream, ferried on banana boats of illusion.

Fragment 1: The Wal-Martyr's Arrival and the Intrusion of the Real

The opening fragment introduces Elmer, the vinyl upholstery cleaner, as a custodian of material remnants, scrubbing stains that symbolize the residues of empire. The banana boat, a relic of United Fruit's "Great White Fleet," serves as an "Ontological Anchorage," anchoring the narrative in the historical materiality of colonial exploitation. Frieza-Lacan's invocation of "refrigerated fartings" and "perishable dreams" evokes Baudrillard's hyperreality, where commodities (bananas, identities) simulate authenticity while masking rot. Elmer's gerbils, nibbling at reality's edges, function as Deleuzian "minor machines," disrupting

the smooth surfaces of narrative coherence with their "wheel-spun prophecies."

The stowaway's emergence—a "creature of fluorescent despair" with plunger hands—marks a Lacanian intrusion of the Real, shattering the Symbolic order of the boat. His confession of "bezzling" (a portmanteau of embezzling and bedazzling, perhaps) Big-Box-Babel critiques consumer capitalism's simulacra: bad checks transmute into electronics, echoing Derrida's *différance* in the deferral of value. The "parchment that self-translates into forgotten tongues, but only for a moment" embodies ephemerality, a fleeting signifier that resists stable meaning. Elmer's misrecognition of the stowaway as a "solvent-fume remez" (a Kabbalistic hint or allusion) underscores the text's hermeneutic instability: identity is "a borrowed plunge," viscous and suctioned by the law's gaze.

This fragment's "Fraudquility"—another neologism blending fraud and tranquility—captures the post-heist calm, a paradoxical

stasis amid chaos. Frieza-Lacan weaves CIA plots into the narrative fabric, suggesting that personal fraud mirrors geopolitical deception, much like Pynchon's paranoid assemblages in *Gravity's Rainbow*. The gerbil's squeak, approving or thesis-like, invites a posthuman reading: animals as oracles in an anthropocentric wreck.

Fragment 2: Inheritance, Multilingualism, and Chaotic Reinvention

Transitioning to inheritance, Fragment 2 employs a "Chausserian consolation" (likely a playful misspelling of Saussurean, invoking linguistic structuralism) amid Ephesians' armor and Lorenz's chaos theory. The dead stowaway's trunk yields absurd artifacts: a "sundial that tells time only by heavenly virtues" and a "rubber chicken that squawked Aramaic prophecies." These objects, tickling and prophetic, recall Deleuze and Guattari's "assemblages," where disparate elements (plungers, chickens) form rhizomatic networks of desire.

Elmer's drift northward, muttering in a "Babelized mashup" of languages, enacts a multilingual smoothie—a metaphor for globalization's homogenizing blender. The octosyllabic rhyme—"The plunger-man dies, his heart in a storm, / Leaving a card that's false in its form"—parodies medieval verse, juxtaposing folly with conservation. Proustian waves of memory, scented with vinyl and banana rot, flood the text, aligning with Bergson's *durée*: time as viscous flow, where crime begets expertise in a "paradoxical ascent."

Here, Frieza-Lacan critiques identity's performativity (à la Butler), as Elmer assumes the "spectral Canadian 'expert'" mantle. The fox's path, alluded to obliquely, evokes cunning reinvention, linking biblical parables (Ephesians) to chaotic bifurcations. This fragment posits language as a chaotic system: small flaps (linguistic slips) yield hurricanes of meaning, mirroring the boat's currents.

Tableau Interlude: Jell-O Utopias and the Collapse of Form

The interlude shifts to Kenora's lakes, "58 pristine mirrors," where Elmer proclaims himself a "Gelatinous Ontologist." This self-fashioning parodies academic expertise, breeding "organic Jell-O" as a wriggling utopia from "algae's womb." The dialogue, crisp as a "Wittgenstein blueprint" yet delivered in "Skaldic patter," blends analytic philosophy with Norse poetics, underscoring language games in absurdity.

Visual and auditory shifts—Matisse collages, Redon's ghosts, Bolex sampling Bach—evoke modernist synesthesia, while Stravinsky's dissonance signals collapse. The Jell-O's refusal to set symbolizes ontological failure: form dissolves into "chaotic froth." Characters like "Sir Pumble" (knightly doubt) and "Mistress Gloop" (shimmering scribe) personify inconsequence, mediating the "divine wobble." Elmer's adjustment of "spiritual armor" via a "newly discovered astrological sign" mocks epistemological quests, while the "Reluctant Archangel" and gerbil-vole spat amplify the farce.

Shakespearean scaffolding breaks in a "Duncan dance toward silence," alluding to Macbeth's regicide and Graham's modernist choreography. This tableau critiques ecological hubris: Jell-O empires crash against nature's resistance, echoing Adorno's dialectics of enlightenment, where rational domination yields irrational folly.

Fragment 3: Gerbil Consolations and the Marriage of Contradictions

The final fragment synthesizes the "unhinged swirl," where Elmer oscillates between empires and voids, akin to Gorecki's symphonic minimalism. Contradictions marry in "coexistence," with the banana boat as a cradle for follies. The gerbil's "pragmatic nibbles" offer posthuman wisdom: "breed memory's hybrids," suggesting hybridity (per Bhabha) as survival strategy.

Sensory ironies, laced with Perelman's sarcasm—"What a plunge! From Walmart heists to lake-side jests"—underscored the text's humor. The rhyming couplet close—

"Chaos flaps its wings in lake and boat, / Consolation comes in what we float"—encapsulates Lorenzian chaos as consolation. The revue ends in "beautiful wreck," whispering through the gerbil's wheel, affirming absurdity's persistence.

Conclusion

Intermittently Scalding is no mere whimsy but a scalding critique of ontological precarity in a world of commodified dreams. Frieza-Lacan's fragments, scattered like Jell-O froth, invite us to wobble with them—embracing instability as the essence of being. In an era of forged identities and ecological unraveling, this tableau reminds us that reality, like vinyl under heat, blurs and confesses. Future scholarship might explore its intertextual debts to Gonzo journalism (Hunter S. Thompson's influence in the plunger-hands) or eco-criticism, but for now, it stands as a testament to literature's capacity to jiggle the foundations of the Real.

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AN OPERETTA



MITZI OF THE TULLE: A BIOLOGICAL TRUTH

Mitzi of the Tulle: A Biological Truth

By Alvin Culwell

(An orchestral chord, a single, sustained, dissonant G minor, hangs in the air, smelling of wet asphalt and old paperbacks.)

A man pushes a baby carriage. This is a sentence, but it's a sentence that has collapsed under the weight of its own signifying, like a bridge made of cheap spaghetti. The wheels, they spin, little wheels of punitive polyurethane, but they don't go anywhere. They describe a perfect arc of ontological anxiety upon the macadam, a substance that retained the ghost-heat of the asphalt plant and the anxieties of the zoning board. This journey is not one of miles but of psychic inches, a slow-motion descent into a hermetically sealed suburban void. And in the carriage,

swaddled in a confection of canary-yellow tulle—a chromatic shriek against the neutral siding of the Levittown-adjacent dreamscape—is a poodle named Mitzi. Mitzi of the Tulle. Mitzi of the absurd.

The man, Rourke, is a walking ruin. His face is a topographical map of theaters of operation—the Berlin '83 unpleasantness, the long, wet silences of the Mekong—now reduced to navigating the treacherous incline of Mrs. Gable's petunias. The tulle is a deliberate affront to the Real, a flimsy barricade against the void. Rourke, whose mastery of the microdot was once total, finds himself paralyzed by the sheer, aggressive yellowness. It is a persistent visual feedback loop reminding him that the Cold War ended not with a bang or a whimper, but with a poodle accessory. He walks, and the pavement beneath him is a ledger of failures, each crack a synapse misfiring. The world, once a place of elegant, brutal systems, has become an

endless, unpunctuated sentence of domesticity, a bad translation of a bad poem.

The woods about the development like an accusation—the Unconscious of the cul-de-sac. The wind off the trees smells of loam, betrayal, and the metallic tang of 1978. The carriage wheel emits a rhythmic creak-thrum that synchronizes perfectly with the memory of a silenced pistol in a Prague alleyway, the silencer coughing like a consumptive ghost. Rourke understands the suburbs as a hermetic seal against history, yet history is leaking through the rhododendrons. The manicured lawn, the white picket fence, the two-car garage—it's a façade, a lie told to the trees. The woods, in their silent, leafy wisdom, know the truth: the rot is always just beneath the surface.

And then, the Leash snapped. It was not dramatic; it was the failure of a cheap clasp, a metaphor for the entire post-

Soviet security architecture. Mitzi, the yellow tutu a bobbing beacon of the Absurd, launched herself into the understory.

"Mitzi!" The sound was a bark of gravel and old bourbon. Rourke plunged after her. The woods closed in. The light changed—no longer the diffuse optimism of the homeowner, but the sharp, green-tinged twilight where the Symbolic order frays. He was searching for a dog; he was searching for an exit.

He found, instead, the Illumination. There, in the crook of a fallen oak, the woods were bleeding light. Rourke recognized the phenomenon Aristotle called "cold fire" (πυρψυχρον), the same luminescence Pliny the Elder had noted on the white wood of Roman olive groves. It was the glow Scandinavians utilized on dark winter nights, and which Micronesian cultures—in a gesture that retroactively justified the poodle's attire—incorporated

into ritual face paint. The glow pulsed, an obscene, cool green, the color of digitized envy. It was the heartbeat of entropy.

And before it, transfixed, stood Mitzi. The yellow tulle was stained with the green light. She was no longer a pet; she was an acolyte. Rourke, paralyzed, observed the event: one of the 71 identified bioluminescent species. This was likely *Neonothopanus gardneri*, whose luciferin and luciferase levels peaked now, on a circadian rhythm, to attract the beetles that Rourke could hear clicking in the brush—the same beetles that would spread the spores. The glow was not for him; it was for the beetles. He had lived his life as a protagonist, but in this moment, he was reduced to a mere observer, a witness to a biological ritual that had nothing to do with him.

Rourke reached for her, his hand encountering the damp air near the glow. The air tasted of copper and ancient rain.

His life did not flash; it unspooled. The asset in Vientiane. The stale coffee. The Tulle. He understood, with a sudden, crushing clarity, that the suburbs were the illusion and the rot was the truth. His entire existence, a symphony of coded messages and calculated betrayals, was less significant than a fungal reproductive cycle.

Mitzi turned, her eyes reflecting the eldritch glare. With a deliberation that shattered Rourke's final, fragile hold on the civilized world, she performed her primary biological imperative directly onto the sacred fungus. It was a Dadaist masterstroke, the ultimate rejection of the sublime. The hot excrement hissed faintly as it struck the cold fire.

The dissonance was too pure. Rourke's heart, that tired engine of compromised virtue, seized. He fell, not like a felled tree, but like a dropped puppet, into the sweet-smelling decay.

The dusk deepened. Mitzi did not return to the carriage. She remained. She sat upon his chest, the ruined tulle soaked with the damp of the earth. She performed her ablutions upon the fallen agent. Hunger drove her to the oak. She ate the *Neonothopanus*.

The process continued. Rourke became landscape. And the poodle, Mitzi of the Yellow Tulle, began to hum. First, her eyes. Then the whorls of her fur. The luciferin integrated. She became the hound of the anti-Baskervilles, a small, pulsating avatar of the merger between the ridiculous and the eternal. She had become an improvised torch, much like those used in Indonesian cultures. She began to roam the woods in a silent, cold, terrifyingly beautiful rage, glowing yellow-green, an unanswerable question squatting forever on the grave of the twentieth century. The man, the poodle, the carriage, the journey—all had been reduced

to a single, glowing, biological truth.
There was no beginning, no end, only the
endless, indifferent cycle of rot and
renewal.







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